1: Conzemius M-4, 5 (1921) 1932
SA15 Mosquito SA15



## DIVISION OF LABOR

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DOMESTIC WORK.—Such domestic industries as spinning, weaving, and the manufacture of pottery, bark cloth, and bead ornaments are female occupations. Tailoring is, however, frequently in the hands of the men, some of whom even make the clothes for their wives. The preparation of food is strictly reserved to the women, the men never condescending to do any cooking, except while away from home. The barbecuing of the chase is, however, the work of the men.

FIELDS.—The husband prepares a patch of the forest for the making of a plantation, by cutting down the trees and cleaning the ground by burning; but the care of the field, that is the planting, weeding, and reaping of the crop, is left to the women.

OTHER OUTSIDE OCCUPATIONS.—The manufacture of fishing and hunting implements, and of canoes and accessories thereto, are man's work. The women fish with the hook, but all other methods of fishing are reserved to the men. The latter fell trees for firewood and cut them into convenient lengths to haul, but the females have to fetch and split it. The woman goes to the waterside to bring the game which her husband has killed and brought in his canoe, but she never accompanies him on the actual hunt, being unacquainted with the handling of hunting weapons.

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LOAD CARRYING.—The carrying of heavy loads is usually left to the women. For this purpose they use a carrying strap, known by the local Spanish name "bombador" or "bambador." The latter consists of a narrow strip of bark cloth, both extremities of which are attached to the burden. The load is first lifted on the back with the assistance of another person and then the pack strap is put around the forehead. The male Indians do not carry anything in this manner, but they secure the package to the back with the aid of shoulder straps, as do the Ladinos. The Spanish-speaking women, however, carry loads generally upon the head, as is the case with the negroes of both sexes. When very tired the Indians give a sort of whistle to catch their breath (M.: *wiñka puhbaya;* T. & P.: *wiñka wrupdanin;* U.: *wiñka wrupdanaka*, lit.: "to blow the breath").

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[262]

DAY LABOR WORK.—In former days many young Miskito, living to the west of Cabo Gracias a Dios, went annually to British Honduras to work there in the mahogany or logwood camps. They left about May and returned in November or December. During this time the settlements on the coast were practically without male inhabitants, except for the boys and old men. The women then had to subsist on fish, crabs, oysters, cockles, the eggs of alligators, turtles, and iguanas, and vegetable food. Now all these Indians easily find work in their own country, either in the mahogany camps or in the

1: Conzemius M-4, 5 (1921) 1932
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224 coarse and unhealthy and even is taboo. The Miskito call it *tilba*, which name is already mentioned at the end of the seventeenth century in the form *tilbu* (M. W.: 311).

LIZARDS.—The largest lizard is the green iguana (*Iguana tuberculata*) which is generally shot while feeding on the river banks or in the branches of some overhanging tree. Sometimes it tries to escape by dashing into the water, where the Indians attempt to catch it by diving after it. It is sometimes kept alive by the Indians until required for food. For this purpose they break the thighs and arm-bones, and put the backbone out of joint; or else they twist the legs and tie the front ones over the back and the hind ones over the tail by their own sinews. The poor animal is thus unable to run away. The eggs of the iguana are also highly esteemed.

BIRDS.—Various species of guans (*Penelope*, *Ortalis*, *Pipile* [49]), the yellow-crested black curassows (*Crax* sp.), mountain hens (*Tinamus* sp.), quails (*Ortyx* sp.), partridges (*Odontophorus* sp.), pigeons (*Colomba* sp.), and wild ducks (*Cairina moschata*) are esteemed as game birds.

224 RETURN FROM THE CHASE.—After the chase the game is carried on
482 the back to the canoe. When a large animal, as a peccary, has been killed each fore and hind foot are tied together with the aid of withes. The Indian, putting his arms through the loops thus formed, with the beast's head downward, carries it on the back, as if shouldering a knapsack. A strap passing over the forehead may also be attached to help support the load. If the hunters are unable to carry all the game at one time the remainder is hung on the branches of some tree, to keep it out of reach of prowling animals.

224 Arrived at his settlement, the Indian merely takes his arms and paddle and walks home, sending his wife down to the waterside to fetch the game. The hair of the latter is then singed by a fire made in the open. The neighbors, who are generally near relatives, receive a share of the meat.

261 Then a big pot is put on the fire, for the Indians do not think of the morrow and, if possible, consume all the meat at once. The women and children do not have patience enough to wait until it is cooked, but they cut off small slices, which they roast over the hot coals and eat, with a few bananas or plantains. If they are unable to dispose of all the supply on the first day the remainder is barbecued without salt over a slow fire. (See Culinary Arts.)

224 HUNTING CHARMS.—Many charms are used for luck in hunting.
777 Stones or pebbles, found in the stomach of certain animals, are

[49] The large guan (*Penelope* sp.) is called *kwamu* by the Miskito, a name found already by M. W. (311) in the form *quawmoes*.

2: Kirchhoff E-4 (no date) 1948
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wore tight cotton bands below the knees and above the ankles. Today woven bands of glass beads are worn around the neck, wrists, and ankles. Straw hats are decorated with feathers and jaguar teeth (*Mosquito, Paya*). 301

Black paint is smeared over the body by the men (*Sumo, Mosquito, Paya*) as a decoration and for protection from insects. Geometrical designs are drawn in red paint, mainly by the women. The *Sumo, Mosquito,* and *Paya* tattooed geometrical designs upon the face, arms, and breast. The *Sumo* men made ornamental scars on their faces and chipped their teeth. All *Sumo* tribes except the *Bawihka* practiced head deformation. During infancy a folding flap of wood at the top of the cradle was tied firmly to the crown of the head. 302 [751] [751] 304

### TRANSPORTATION

Loads are carried with a band passing over the head (women) or across the chest (men). Children are carried on the back in a blanket, the points of which are tied in front. 482 [855] [987]

The country has hunting trails but no roads. Most travel is done in dugout canoes propelled with poles and broad-bladed paddles. Rafts are used for down-river traffic. Large keeled canoes, often equipped with a sail, are used at sea. 501

### MANUFACTURES

**Basketry.**—Crude baskets, mainly of wickerwork, are made chiefly for storage bins. Bark and silk grass fiber bags are very common. Bark fiber is used also to make tumplines, hammocks, and such. 285

**Bark cloth.**—Bark cloth is beaten out of ficus-tree bark with a grooved wooden mallet. 287

**Weaving.**—Cotton is spun on a spindle, which has a whorl and is rotated in a gourd. Coarse-textured but soft cotton cloth is woven on a two-beam loom. Thread was formerly dyed and designs were woven in the cloth. Sometimes feathers, particularly a fringe of white Muscovy duck down, were incorporated into the fabric. 286

**Ceramics.**—Pottery making has been described only from the *Sumo* and *Paya*, although pottery was formerly made by all tribes. Women model small vessels out of a lump of clay but build up large ones with coils. They polish them with a pebble, dry them for several days, and fire them in the open. Pottery types include jars about 4 feet (1.3 m.) high, various types of jugs, water jars, small bowls, griddles, and tobacco pipes. All vessels have a convex base. 323

**Miscellaneous manufactures.**—Metates are still used by the *Paya* and *Sumo*, and they have recently been adopted by the *Jicaque*, but the *Mosquito* are said no longer to use them. Metates are flat-topped boulders, which only rarely have a trimmed surface. Manos are round pebbles. 415

3: Pijoan D-5 (ca. 1945) 1946
SA15 Mosquito SA15



### TOOLS

Before the conquest the Miskito had very few tools and as has been 442
pointed out by Conzemius[1] these Indians were living in a wood age rather than a stone age. Today the common tools in use are noted in the order of their importance. The machete *(ispara)*, a heavy knife varying from one to two feet in length is the most commonly used tool. It can be used for almost any purpose from clearing bush to ligging postholes. It can also be used as a weapon of defense as well as for cutting and slicing food. Second to the machete is the ax *(asa)* which is used for chopping trees and preparing timber. These axes are made of metal and stone *(alwani mahbra)*. Adzes *(ats)* are today in common use for the making of boats and other objects of wood. With the exception of the stone ax both the machete and the adze are of post Colombian origin.[1] Hoes have been introduced in the last century and these are used primarily for clearing weeds. A variety of knives *(skiro, kisuro)* are seen in all households and used not only to cut with for eating purposes as well.

### DIVISION OF WORK

The husband prepares the patch of forest for the plantation. He 462
cuts down the trees and clears the ground by fire. However, the major part of planting, weeding, and taking in the crop is left to the wife. The manufacture of hunting and fishing implements is the man's job. Fishing, however, is carried out by both men and women. The building of canoes is the man's work although women sometimes assist him in this arduous work. Men will cut trees for firewood but the women have to fetch the lengths of timber cut by the men.

It is customary for women to carry heavy loads but the men occasionally do. Heavy loads are placed on the back by the use of a [482]
carrying strap (*bombador*). Many of the women carry loads on their heads.

All the domestic industries such as weaving, spinning, cooking, etc., are female occupations. Tailoring, however, is shared by both the men and the women. The barbecuing of the chase is the only cooking men indulge in.

### FUNCTIONAL ENTERPRISE

Interchange of commodities is commonly effected by barter but 439
today there is an ever increasing use of currency (córdoba). Trading is carried out with traders and the Indians in many instances exchange